



Information **UPDATE**

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent/P.O. Box 7841/ Madison, WI 53707-7841

BULLETIN NO. 04.01

January 2004

TO: District Administrators, CESA Administrators, CCDEB Administrators,
Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Other Interested Parties

FROM: Carolyn Stanford Taylor, Assistant State Superintendent
Division for Learning Support: Equity and Advocacy

SUBJECT: Guidelines for Complying with the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for
Students with Disabilities—Part 5: Title I Regulations on Alternate
Achievement Standards

This bulletin is the fifth in a series of bulletins describing the guidelines for complying with the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities (WAA). This bulletin explains the final Title I regulations on Alternate Achievement Standards for students with disabilities. These were released by the Department of Education on December 9, 2003. The regulations may be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/reg/list.jhtml>. The regulations include a definition of "significant cognitive disabilities," a further description of alternate achievement standards and a process for states and school districts to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for students with disabilities who participate in the WAA.

The term "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities" includes a small number of students who have been determined to have one or more of the 13 existing impairment areas in PI 11. These impairments prevent them from meeting grade-level achievement standards. It should be noted in Wisconsin, Cognitive Disabilities refers to students who have met the eligibility criteria for the impairment of Cognitive Disabilities. The term "significant cognitive disabilities" is used in a more inclusive manner in these federal regulations.

In Wisconsin, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team determines how a student will participate in statewide assessment. The WAA Participation Checklist is used to determine if a student with a disability will participate in the WAA. Using the WAA Participation Checklist, the IEP team makes the determination that the student is meeting alternate achievement standards that differ in the complexity from grade-level achievement standards. Alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards must be aligned with the state's academic content standards, promote access to the general curriculum and reflect professional judgment of the highest achievement standards possible for that student.

The WAA is part of the Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS) and is designed to assess the educational performance of students with disabilities who cannot meaningfully participate in the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) even with accommodations. The WAA

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability.

for students with disabilities focuses on the knowledge and skills that are aligned with Wisconsin Model Academic Standards in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. These knowledge and skills are considered to be prerequisite to the majority of content assessed by the WKCE. All students with disabilities who participate in the WAA for students with disabilities are counted for participation and contribute to the 95% participation requirement in No Child Left Behind.

The regulations allow Wisconsin, that uses an alternate assessment aligned with state academic content standards, to incorporate scores of students participating in WAA for students with disabilities who obtain a Prerequisite Skill (PS) Proficient (PS Level 3) or a PS Advanced (PS Level 4) in their AYP calculations. A district may use up to 1.0 percent of all students in the grades assessed for this calculation if they perform at PS Proficient or PS Advanced.

In 2002-03, any student in the students with disabilities group who took the WAA for students with disabilities was counted as “not proficient.” As a consequence, prior to this school year, all students with disabilities participating in the WAA for students with disabilities were part of the district’s denominator. No students were counted in the numerator.

Beginning with the 2003-04 AYP determination, if students take the WAA and obtain a PS Proficient (PS Level 3) or a PS Advanced (PS Level 4) score, schools will be able to count as “proficient” on prerequisite skills up to 1.0 percent of their students. Guidance from the Office of Special Education suggests that about 2.0 percent of the total population will need an alternate assessment. If a district had 200 students in the tested grades, they may have four students taking the WAA based on an IEP Team decision. Two of those students, if they achieved a PS Proficient (PS Level 3) or a PS Advanced (PS Level 4) score on the WAA, could be counted in the AYP calculation.

The regulations allow states and districts to apply for exceptions in order to exceed the 1.0 percent cap. Wisconsin will be developing a process in the near future and deadlines for districts to submit applications to exceed the 1.0 percent cap. We will be publishing this process and deadlines in an upcoming bulletin.

The WAA Participation Checklist, the updated WAA Rating Scale, the updated WAA PowerPoint Presentation, and an updated Frequently Asked Questions document are available on our website at: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/assmt-waa.html>.

Questions regarding this bulletin may be directed to the Special Education Team at (608) 266-1781.

This information update can also be accessed through the Internet at: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/bulindex.html>

mks